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| **Numbers**  *Mary Cornish*  **I like the generosity of numbers. The way, for example, they are willing to count anything or anyone: two pickles, one door to the room, eight dancers dressed as swans.**  **I like the domesticity of addition-- *add two cups of milk and stir*-- the sense of plenty: six plums on the ground, three more falling from the tree.**  **And multiplication's school of fish times fish, whose silver bodies breed beneath the shadow of a boat.**  **Even subtraction is never loss, just addition somewhere else: five sparrows take away two, the two in someone else's garden now.**  **There's an amplitude to long division, as it opens Chinese take-out box by paper box, inside every folded cookie a new fortune.**  **And I never fail to be surprised by the gift of an odd remainder, footloose at the end: forty-seven divided by eleven equals four, with three remaining.**  **Three boys beyond their mothers' call, two Italians off to the sea, one sock that isn't anywhere you look.**    from *Poetry* magazine Volume CLXXVI, Number 3, June 2000  Copyright 2000 by The Modern Poetry Association.  All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission ([*click for permissions information*](https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/p180-permissions.html#008)). |
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